# Maximus of Hispania

**(c. 409 – c. 417)**

## BRIEFING

**Maximus** was a Roman usurper (409–411) in Hispania (the Iberian Peninsula, modern Spain and Portugal). He was declared emperor by the general Gerontius, who might have been his father.

## BIOGRAPHY

Gerontius had previously served the usurper Constantine III, who had sent him to Hispania. Relations between the two men deteriorated throughout the year 409, and when Constantine sent an army under his son and heir Constans in the late summer of 410, Gerontius mutinied and installed Maximus. Kullikowski suggests that Gerontius may have feared being replaced as Constantine's chief military figure in the provinces of Hispania. Drinkwater on the other hand suggests that Gerontius, seeing Constantine negotiating with Emperor Honorius over 409, had decided to side with the local Theodosian supporters. However, by the summer of 410 Gerontius had received no support from Italy, was threatened by Constans and desperate for imperial authority to confirm his arrangements with his barbarian allies. Faced by these threats, "Gerontius was at length driven into open revolt."

Maximus managed some degree of rule over the provinces of Hispania. Kullikowski reports that "the mint at Barcino struck coins in his name and there is evidence for major construction work on that city's walls during reign."

In the first 18 months of his reign Gerontius's forces defeated Constantine's forces, killed his son Constans at Vienna (modern Vienne, Isère) and trapped Constantine himself inside Arelas. Seeing the losses of the armies of the two usurpers, Honorius sent his general Constantius into Gaul; Gerontius' soldiers deserted him for the imperial general. Gerontius retired to Hispania, where he killed himself after his remaining troops turned on him.

Deprived of his major supporter, Maximus reportedly fled to sanctuary "amongst the barbarians in Hispania." Prosper of Tiro recorded that he was pardoned when he was removed from power.

The remainder of the recorded history of this shadowy figure becomes even more murky. He is commonly identified with a second Maximus who started his rebellion in Hispania between July 419 and February 421. According to Marcellinus Comes, this Maximus was brought to Rome where he was displayed and executed, along with one Jovinianus, around 23 January 422, during Honorius' tricennalia. Kullikowski supports this identification, explaining that he was defeated and captured by the *comes* Asterius, for which achievement Asterius was rewarded with the Patriciate.


**Biography:**

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For references to primary sources, see entries in *RE* or the *PLRE*. Translations of much of the source material can be found in C.D. Gordon ( *The Age of Attila: Fifth-Century Byzantium and the Barbarians* [Ann Arbor, 1960]) and R.C. Blockley (*Fragmentary Classicising Historians of the Later Roman Empire* [Liverpool, 1983], vol. 2).